

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address:	1321 21st St, NW,	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	November 29, 2012	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	12-502	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Kim Elliott	X	New Construction

Architect James Phillips of Workshop t10, on behalf of the owner The Rubin Group, seeks conceptual design review for a rear and partial roof addition on a contributing three-story (two-story above a raised basement) row house in the Dupont Circle Historic District. The additions are being undertaken as part of a conversion of the house to a six-unit building.

The 1921 front porch row house with Craftsman details is among a row diverse in styles and scale along this stretch of 21st Street. The row houses along this block back up to an alley and several larger hotel and apartment buildings that face New Hampshire Avenue.

Proposal

The proposal calls for a new basement access at the front elevation, partial removal of the main house roof, and a four-story brick addition (3-stories above a raised basement) at the rear. The project includes demolition of a small non-contributing one-story rear building, and a non-contributing garage at the alley.

The project will introduce a new basement entrance below the existing porch with minimal landscape intervention. The alterations to the main house keep the original elevations and structure of the main house including the terracotta pent roof. From the peak of the pent roof, a new roof with a shallow slope would extend upward to gain sufficient head height for an occupiable 3rd floor.

The three-story plus basement addition would extend the full width of the site and project 38'-6" from the rear of the main house. The deep lot allows for a rear yard and two parking spaces behind the addition before meeting the alley. The proposed brick massing references the predominant material used in houses, rear additions and alley buildings in this row. The existing house and new addition will be connected by a glazed stair atrium space that allows additional light into the main house and the rear addition. The new roof on the main house and the rear addition will not be visible from the street.

Evaluation

The applicant has worked closely with the HPO to revise the design, maintain the original building architectural features, bring down the overall height, and to pursue a massing that is compatible with the pattern of development for rear buildings/additions in this area.

The new basement entrance is consistent with the Board's guidelines for basement stairs and areaways in that it is compatible with the existing architecture, retains the character defining features of the house, is subordinate to the primary entrance, and respects the original topography. While HPO had originally recommended that a portion of the alternating brick screen below the porch (a common character-defining feature) be retained, the current remaining screen is not original and would be so minimal, that it is a cleaner approach to simply eliminate it and use plantings to screen the base of the porch.

The new shallow slope roof begins at the peak of the pent roof, preserving the character-defining pent terracotta roof. The sightlines from numerous angles along 21st Street as well as stepping down Newport Street illustrate that the new roof and addition would not be visible from the streetscape. As the proposal

is further developed, the detailing of how the new roof intersects with the existing should be developed so that flashing of the connection does not overlap or result in alterations to the existing roof ridge. Any alteration of or connection to the existing roof should not alter its appearance as seen from the street.

Although the addition would be visible from the alley, there is no context of uniformity among this row of rear yards, and the new addition will extend approximately the same depth as several other houses on this block, including the adjacent neighbor to the north. While the addition is very modern in character, this simple, clean design would join an eclectic row of additions, garages and carriage houses (historic and non-contributing) that vary in height and scale and materiality. The rear building and glass atrium addition do not destroy existing character-defining details, ornamentation, or material of the existing house. The Board has traditionally allowed greater design flexibility for rear additions, particularly when they are not visible from a public street, as they do not affect the important character-defining features for which historic districts are recognized. In recent years, similarly contemporary rear additions have been approved by the Board at 1605 S Street, NW, 2017 N Street, and 1636 17th Street (all within the Dupont Circle Historic District).

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board:

- *Approve the concept for basement entry, roof alteration and rear addition and delegate final approval to staff;*
- *Reiterate that no portion of this recommendation or the Board's action shall be construed as support for any needed zoning relief.*